

The Locavore's Garden

Basic Vegetable Gardening in the Pacific Northwest



Vegetable gardens need well drained soil rich in organic matter, sited in full sun. For gardening year round on heavier soils, building mounded or framed raised beds is helpful. If you have sandy soil that drains well, you can probably get by with ground level beds.

Soil preparation for new gardens: Remove or kill the existing vegetation. One easy and effective method (although slow) is to apply layers of cardboard or newspaper topped with

organic matter such as compost or dead leaves, and leave it to kill the vegetation underneath. After 4-6 months, the cardboard/newspaper will have decayed enough to be worked into the soil along with the organic matter on top.

At this point, a soil test can be helpful. For most soils, adding dolomite lime and a good all purpose vegetable fertilizer will be enough to get you going.

Some terms:

- Sow=plant from seed. Direct sow=plant seeds directly in the ground rather than growing in pots for transplant.
- Cloche/coldframe=plastic, fiberglass or glass over low frames to create more warmth. These need venting on sunny days. Tunnel= large enough to walk into. Cloches and tunnels can greatly extend your seasons.
- Compost= (short description of a complex subject) compost is made by combining different forms of organic matter, i.e. leaves, kitchen scraps, sometimes poultry, cow or other manure, and containing it until it decays. It can then be used to add organic matter to the garden. Turning and aerating your compost will help it decay faster. Manure must be aged/composted before putting on the garden.
- Floating row cover=spun fabric that increases warmth, lets water, light, and air through, and protects crops from insects.
- Cover crops=annual crops grown to turn into the soil. These provide organic matter and some (crimson clover, vetch) provide Nitrogen, some (buckwheat, sweet yellow clover) bring up minerals. They can be cut down and turned in a few weeks before planting your crops.
- Open pollinated vs. Hybrid seed= Open pollinated seed refers to seed which was naturally pollinated by wind or insects. Seed collected from open

pollinated plants will often be 'true', or just like the parent plant. Hybrid seed is the result of deliberate human controlled crosses, made to develop plants with specific traits. Seed collected from those plants will either be sterile or not breed 'true' but produce off types. All heirloom varieties (and many modern ones) are open pollinated. If you want to save seed for following seasons, you need to use open pollinated seed.

Timetable: In the PNW, you can plant and harvest something most of the year. For basic, spring through fall gardening, below is a general timetable of what you can plant. One clue to planting-look at what kinds of starts are available at your local nursery, farm coop or grocery store. It's okay to buy transplants if you miss sowing seeds!

Mid February-mid March:

- Sow cool weather crops indoors for planting out in late March to early April. This includes spinach, salad greens (lettuce, arugula, leafy mustards and Asian greens), swiss chard, broccoli, cabbage, kale and cauliflower.
- Sow onion and shallot seeds indoors; these will go out in April.
- Sow peas, shelling, snow or snap, outside. In warmer winters, peas can be sown as early as mid-February, but most years later sowings will catch up.
- Beets can be direct sown outside, but you can also wait until April. If you have well drained soil, carrots can also be direct sown.
- If you have a cold frame or cloche, you can sow transplants of lettuce, spinach and other greens out in early March.

mid-March on:

- Sow radishes to eat with your salad greens.
- If you want to grow tomatoes and peppers from seed, start them now.
- Plant early potatoes now (and again in early June).

April:

- Sow more salad greens, either in a cloche for faster growth, or out in the open garden.
- Sow beets and chard if you haven't already.
- Direct seed brassicas such as broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage. A floating row cover helps protect them from cabbage root maggot.
- Plant onion starts.
- Start basil inside to plant outside in late May.
- Late in April, start cucumbers and squash indoors. Grow them only 3-4 weeks inside before planting out- don't disturb their roots.

May:

- Sow more salad greens!
- If the weather has warmed and frost danger is past, you can plant corn and beans. If they fail, you may need to replant later in the month.
- If you can plant in a cloche or tunnel, plant out your tomatoes. Later in the month, plant your peppers. Both of these crops appreciate the warmth a cloche or tunnel provides, and helps protect from rain borne diseases.
- Sow carrots if you haven't already, or a second crop.
- Plant out basil. Use a cloche if the weather stays cold.

June:

- Start more salad greens.

- Sow Brussels Sprouts and fall cabbage early in the month. Other fall brassicas can be started the 2nd or 3rd week of June
- Plant late season corn.
- Plant out cucumbers and squash.

July:

- Sow salad greens.
- Sow winter beets before mid month.
- Start a bed of fall/winter carrots. Choose a variety known for good winter ground storage, such as Autumn King or Merida.
- Sow overwintering brassicas (cauliflower, cabbage, kale) by mid-month
- Plant leek starts.

August:

- Sow winter salad greens and spinach first half of the month.
- Sow Arugula and hardy mustard greens second half of August.

September:

- You can still plant fast growing greens such as arugula and some Asian greens first half of the month.
- Plant garlic now until the ground freezes.
- Sow cover crops in empty spaces.

October:

- Plant garlic if you haven't yet.
- Plant cover crops in empty ground.
- Put cloches over fall/winter brassicas and greens; this will keep them in good condition longer.

A few good sources for cool summer climate seed varieties:

Uprising Seeds- 2208 Iron St Bellingham, WA 98225 (360)778-3749 Available at Community Food Coop and other local stores

Territorial Seed Company Cottage Grove, OR www.territorialseed.com Available online and at many local farm and feed stores

Johnny's Selected Seeds Winslow, MN www.johnnyseeds.com Other side of the country but lots of suitable varieties, good quality seed.

West Coast Seed Ladner, BC Canada www.westcoastseeds.com Same climate, many Heirloom and OP seed varieties.

Wild Garden Seeds Philmoth, OR www.wildgardenseeds.com Mostly greens and herbs, all organic, heirlooms and open pollinated.

Books and Resources;

[Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades](#) Steve Solomon

[Winter Gardening in the Maritime Northwest](#) Binda Colebrook

[Maritime Northwest Garden Guide](#) Seattle Tilth

Some varieties we like, easy to grow:

Salad greens:

Lettuce- Merlot, Flashy Trouts Back, Winter Density, Slo-bolt

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360-966-5859 www.cloudmountainfarmcenter.org

Spinach- Olympia, Tye, Winter Giant (fall planting only)
Mustards-Ruby Streaks, Golden Streaks, Giant Red
Arugula
Chard- Rainbow
Mesclun mixes (mixes of lettuce and cold hardy greens, can be thickly sown and cut repeatedly for baby greens)

Brassicas:

Broccoli- Umpqua, Nutribud
Cabbage- Early Jersey Wakefield, January King, Melissa (savoy) Late Flat Dutch
Kale- Dwarf Siberian, Redbor, Nero di Toscano
Cauliflower- Snow Crown

Peas:

Sugar Snap
Sugar Sprint

Beets:

Early Wonder Tall Top
Bulls Blood
Cylindra
Touchstone Gold

Carrots:

Merida
Autumn King
Dragon

Beans:

Pole- Helda, Musica, Northeaster, Speckled Cranberry(dry)
Bush-
Dry- Lina Cisco Bird Egg, King of the Early, Kenealy Yellow Eye, Becca Brown

Tomatoes:

Black Krim
Striped Roman
Stupice
Black Cherry
Legend

Corn:

Bodacious
Sugar Buns

Potatoes:

Yukon Gold

Onions/Leeks/Shallots:

Onions: Walla Walla Sweet, Copra (storage), Ailsa Craig
Shallots: Ambition, Bonilla, Saffron
Leeks: Lancelot, Sir Richard

Peppers:

Sweet: Carmen, Tollis Italian, Golden Treasure
Hot: Early Jalapeno, Hot Portugal, Red Mushroom

Other:

Garlic- any variety, softnecks store the longest, hardnecks have great flavor
Herbs- Cilantro 'Calypso', Basil 'Compact Genovese', 'Genovese'